

FACT SHEET

COEUR d'ALENE RIVER BASIN



ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION AGENCY

JANUARY 2002

UPDATE #8

Public Comment Period Extended for Proposed Cleanup Plan

The comment period for the Proposed Plan has been extended an additional 60 days. Comments will be accepted until **February 26, 2002**. Comments should be addressed to:

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EPA expects to release the Record of Decision in spring 2002. The exact timing will depend on how many comments we receive

and the type of changes that need to be made to the proposed cleanup plan.

Public comments are most helpful when they:

- ☐ Are as specific as possible;
- ☐ Tell us which elements of the proposal you support, which elements you disagree with and explain why you feel the way you do;
- ☐ Provide specific examples and suggestions for solutions or improvements;
- ☐ Include your name and address.

Dear Friends:

I want to thank everyone in the Basin who took time out to meet with me during my visit in early December. You were very helpful in making your feelings about the complex cleanup situation clearer for me. I heard your serious concerns about EPA's role and pledge to do everything I can to improve EPA's relationships with people in the Basin. I want to ensure that we can work together to move forward with a sensible cleanup plan.

During my meetings I also heard:

- ☐ Your concerns about the stigma associated with Superfund sites;
- ☐ Your concerns about how long cleanup will take and the need for certainty, so that the Basin communities can prosper; and
- ☐ Your concerns about getting cleanup done in a common sense way.

**Message from John Iani,
EPA Region 10 Administrator**

As we approach the Record of Decision for the Basin, we will continue to seek your thoughts and feelings about how we can make the project work better for everyone. We understand that you want a sense of certainty about exactly where, when and why cleanup actions are proposed. In response, I'm committed to giving you as clear a picture as we can of a very challenging set of issues.

While we may not always agree, I'm convinced that by truly listening to all views and maintaining a respectful dialogue as we move forward, we will accomplish our goals of protecting the health of this and future generations and ensuring that the Coeur d'Alene Basin remains a showpiece of Idaho.

Very Truly Yours,

*John Iani, Regional Administrator
U.S. EPA*

Frequently Asked Questions

The following are some of the questions we heard during the Proposed Plan public meetings in November 2001.

How will the National Superfund Ombudsman's recommendations affect the Proposed Plan and ROD?

We've made sure that the Ombudsman is aware of our current schedule for the Proposed Plan and Record of Decision. When we receive the Ombudsman's final recommendations, we will consider them and take appropriate action at that time. If the Ombudsman makes his recommendations after the Record of Decision is issued, and the recommendations result in substantial changes to the cleanup plan, these changes would be subject to additional public review and comment.

Will the latest Basin blood-lead screening results change the proposed cleanup actions for protecting human health?

We are encouraged by the declines in blood lead from the annual blood lead screening. However, these results will not change the proposed plan for human health protection, which seeks to prevent children from having elevated blood lead levels. The annual blood lead screening is a voluntary program that was not designed as a study to represent the blood levels in all of the children living in the Basin. In addition, the blood-lead screening program measures lead exposure after it has occurred and therefore does not address prevention as recommended by EPA's Superfund guidance.

The goal of the proposed plan is to prevent exposure to lead contaminated soil and dust before exposure occurs, and to ensure that every child has a less than five percent chance of having a blood-lead level above the CDC guideline of 10 micrograms per deciliter.

When it comes to cleanups in residential areas, EPA and the State of Idaho want to make sure that individual property owners understand the conditions on their property and are involved in the cleanup decisions that affect their property.

What is the difference between the \$359 million cleanup and the \$1.4 billion cleanup we are hearing about?

EPA is currently proposing a 20-to-30 year cleanup plan estimated to cost \$359 million. EPA is not proposing a \$1.4 billion cleanup plan.

The \$359 million proposed cleanup plan includes all of the work needed to address the human health risks in the Basin communities and priority activities to address ecological risks. Under this proposal, the cleanup to protect human health in the communities would be complete in approximately five years. The ecological priority actions would be evaluated over time to determine what additional work is needed.

The \$1.4 billion figure is the total cost of one of the ecological cleanup alternatives in the Basin Feasibility Study. The ecological priority actions in the proposed cleanup plan are a subset of those alternatives. At this time, EPA is proposing only the 20-to-30 year, \$359 million plan. Any additional cleanup work would need to be evaluated and would undergo public review and a formal decision-making process including all parties.

Why wasn't the State of Idaho's alternative selected as the Basin cleanup plan?

EPA's proposed cleanup plan is similar to the State of Idaho's cleanup alternative for the Basin. EPA worked closely with the State of Idaho on the human health cleanup remedy. EPA's proposed plan and the State's alternative propose to remove and replace residential soils above 1,000 parts per million lead and to place vegetation on yards above 700 parts per million lead. Both also propose to remove contaminated sediments from the lower river beds and banks and to improve waterfowl and fish habitat throughout the Basin.

Who is going to pay for the cleanup? What if federal dollars aren't available?

Funding for cleanup will likely come from several sources: from the federal government — both Superfund and non-Superfund dollars; from the States; and from settlement monies and voluntary cleanups. Currently, EPA's Superfund budget is appropriated annually from Congress. Annual

estimated costs for cleanup in the Basin have been provided in our budget projections and requests to Congress. The amount of cleanup work that can be conducted in a given year is dependent upon the year-to-year Congressional appropriations. To date, the Bunker Hill/Coeur d'Alene Basin work has been a priority for funding.

Who will implement the cleanup work once the Record of Decision is issued?

EPA supports the objectives of the State of Idaho's "Basin Environmental Improvement Act." EPA is working with the State on how we can best participate in the new Basin commission. EPA is fully committed to working cooperatively with the States of Idaho and Washington, the Coeur d'Alene and Spokane Tribes, the Federal Natural Resource Trustee Agencies and the local governments in the Basin to implement the cleanup after the Record of Decision is issued.

In addition, EPA is supportive of the appropriate state, tribal and local entities taking the lead in implementing parts of the Record of Decision.

How long will cleanup take?

Cleanup work to protect human health in the communities and residential areas is targeted for completion within the first five years after the Record of Decision is issued. It will take significantly longer (many decades) to meet some of the environmental standards in the affected parts the Coeur d'Alene River system. However, once the work in the communities is complete, we can begin the process of removing the Superfund designation from those areas.

What if the State of Idaho doesn't provide the needed 10 percent matching funds for the cleanup?

In order for EPA to spend Superfund dollars for long-term cleanup in the Basin, we must have a commitment from the state that it will pay 10 percent of the cleanup costs. If the state doesn't provide the 10 percent matching funds, another source of funds would be needed in order to move forward with remedial actions in the Basin. EPA could also continue some limited "removal" actions, but we could not fully implement the Record of Decision. To date, the State has been able

to provide the needed 10 percent match for cleanup work in the 21-square-mile Box. EPA has flexibility in what is applied toward matching funds. For example, if the state chooses to conduct some of the cleanup work, the dollar value of that work would be credited as matching funds. EPA is committed to continuing to work with the State to help meet the match requirement.

Where will the waste repositories be located in the Basin?

It is likely that several waste repositories will be needed in the Basin. Some of the things that need to be considered when locating repositories are: where and when waste material will be removed; the amount of contaminated material that needs to be disposed of; accessibility to existing roads; travel distances for the waste material; possible impacts to groundwater and surface water; and current and future land uses. We won't know exactly how much material will need to be disposed of or exactly where cleanup actions will occur until the after the Record of Decision is issued.

EPA, the State and others are now pulling together the existing information and updating Geographical Information System (GIS) maps that relate to waste repository siting criteria and potential locations. This spring, new information about possible repository locations will be gathered by working with the the State of Idaho, the Coeur d'Alene Tribe, Panhandle Health District, local elected officials, federal trustees and the public.

Is the Superfund Site the entire 1,500 square miles of the Coeur d'Alene River drainage?

Some people have asked whether the entire Coeur d'Alene River Basin is a Superfund site. The answer is no. Some of EPA's presentations use a map of the entire Basin to show the area that was studied during the Remedial Investigation. This map is not intended to depict the Superfund site. The Superfund site is made up only of those areas in the Basin where contamination exists. These areas are primarily near historic mining operations; in some of the residential and commercial areas of the upper Basin; in and near the affected parts of the Coeur d'Alene River system; and other downstream areas where contaminated sediments have been deposited.



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EPA's Webpage address

<http://yosemite.epa.gov/r10/cleanup.nsf/sites/cda>

Contacts

If you have questions or need more information, please call Marianne Deppman, EPA's Community Involvement Coordinator at 206-553-1237 or toll free at 1-800-424-4372 or Dick Martindale EPA's Community Liaison, in Coeur d'Alene at 664-4588.